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ABSTRACT

A study of a subculture of Vietnam veterans on the Florida State University campus in 1989 uncovered a small, informal, and low-key group of men and women. The literature showed that the returning Vietnam veteran faced negative images and was a student misfit; the college experience of many was one of quiet desperation as they attempted to escape the image many people had of them; military duty had a negative effect upon post-military achievement; and this population faced special post-war readjustment problems. Information was gathered about the support group of Vietnam veteran students by observing and interacting with them. Several members completed a brief survey instrument that collected demographic details. The group met on an irregular basis to share the camaraderie of their military and college experiences. The primary purpose of the group was to provide social, academic, and emotional support for each other. Members had concerns similar to other students--education, careers, future jobs, welfare of their children, and the manner in which they are able to get their needs met. One purpose of the study was to assess the extent to which Vietnam veteran students had recovered from their wartime experiences and how well they were integrated into society. Positive answers to both concerns reflected the tenacity of these veterans. (Appendixes include a taxonomy of subculture language used by Vietnam veterans, the survey instrument, and a list of 15 references.) (YLB)

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STEPCHILDREN OF ARCHAOES

An Ethnography of a Support Group for Vietnam Veterans at the Florida State University Campus

By

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January 1990

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INTRODUCTION

In all too many instances, being a Vietnam veteran meant having few friends and no natural advocate constituency, either politically, economically, or morally. Vietnam veterans have suffered because of this and have learned how to go-it-alone in a society that tried to forget they existed. The decade of the 1970'S was a long one for these men and women; it was a time to recover from the war and a time to try and pick up the pieces and start anew. Those men and women who attended college found an indifferent environment where the best course of action was to keep a low profile and mind their own business - no cared who they were or what they were doing on campus. The 1980'S revealed a nation more able to sensitively reassess the role of the Vietnam veteran during wartime and how they were treated stateside during peacetime. It was a period of consolidation and advances for the majority of Vietnam veterans and most were successfully re-integrated back into society. A college education was frequently the pathway to a meaningful career and a better understanding of themselves and their fellow countrymen. Unlike the prior decade, the college environment was friendlier and more accepting of their being on campus.

The purpose of this paper will be to examine the Vietnam veteran as a college student at Florida State University in 1989. This will be accomplished through a review of the literature, and by conducting an ethnographic study of a student subculture of Vietnam veterans. A secondary purpose of this effort will be to assess how their recovery from wartime experiences is

progressing and how well they believe their social integration is proceeding.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The memory of the war in Vietnam is quickly fading from the consciousness of most Americans. But for many of the 3.4 million men and women who served their country in a distant land (Hammerschmidt, 1982) the memories of that experience still echo the pain and suffering they endured. When the final airplane left Saigon, it carried as its cargo the last of the warriors who served in Vietnam. As they returned home and tried to put together the pieces of their former lives, there came a realization that when one war ended, another had just begun. The foxholes in Vietnam were replaced by societal "mental foxholes" that many found inescapable (Williams, 1983).

Returning Vietnam veterans began to discover the pervasiveness of these societal "mental foxholes" as well as their subtle and covert nature. The aftermath of the opposition to the war in Vietnam caught the "nam vet" by surprise and with few friends. They marched off to war as boys and girls and returned as men and women, and society was not ready to accept them. At times the the civilian sector of society was hostile and antagonistic to the veteran; most other times it was just passive and indifferent. The veteran soon learned to approach people and organizations with caution. The people professions were divided in their attitudes toward the war and many spoke out against it. Included in this group were mental health, social work, and education professionals (Kelter, Doggett, & Johnson,

1983). The Vietnam veteran often faced abuse at the hands of persons working in the Veterans Administration (VA). Sonnenberg, Blank, and Talbot (1985) report numerous episodes of intense hostility or contempt for veteran patients by federal employees working in the local VA medical centers (VAMC).

The educational experiences of Vietnam veterans were also affected in many ways, and to a large extent negative images of them have prevented many from achieving the socioeconomic status that was gained by those not serving in Vietnam. Figley (1980) has written about the Vietnam veteran as a student misfit. World War II veterans comprised roughly 50 percent of the student population at universities. This is contrasted with a less than 10 percent average for the same universities in 1973. Much of this disparity is explained by a dramatic increase in college attendance brought on by the post-World War II population boom. This lower percentage is also explained by a much higher total of World War II veterans compared to Vietnam veterans (18 million versus 3.40 million). Undoubtedly, Vietnam veterans represent a miniscule percentage of the total college population in 1989. Whether we speak of college attendance today, or in the late 1960'S and early 1970's, the Vietnam veteran represents a minority group on campus.

During the 1970'S the veteran was apprehensive upon entering college and generally kept a low profile. Unlike his peers in World War II, the Vietnam veteran tended to fade into the campus woodwork. Upon entering post-secondary education after his tour of duty "in country", the Vietnam veteran soon found himself caught in a mental and social bind; the political left

viewed him as a dupe of American Imperialism, and the political right thought of him as a loser. The veteran was a member of a discredited status group and tended to avoid those situations that identified hims as a "nam vet." By trying to assuage its guilt, society stigmatized the enlisted ex-soldiers as "they," the dirty workers who had become "killers." The Vietnam veteran had negative status compared with the socially "clean" veterans of previous wars. In sum, "dirty" soldiers fight "bad wars" and suffer various forms of stigmatization (Figley, 1980, p. 272).

The college experience of many Vietnam veterans was one of quiet desperation while they attempted to escape the reputation many people had of them. In many instances, public attitudes toward the "nam vet" have taken up where the enemy's bullet's left off. Vietnam veterans have been a continuing source of fear and distrust to the legal and mental health professions. It is not surprising that many Americans came to perceive the warriors in a very negative manner. The media and the film industry frequently capitalize on these myths, misconceptions, and distortions of fact that surround the veteran and their adjustment to peacetime America (Boulanger and Kadushin, 1986).

Across the landscape of the United States, in almost every community, Vietnam veterans have been previously labeled as "drug-crazed baby killers," (Egendorf, 1982) time bombs, violent and lawless persons, alcoholics and drug addicts (Boulanger and Kadushin, 1986). Although research does show that combat veterans are more likely than comparable others to exhibit violent behavior today (Pardeck and Nolden, 1983), it is

associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), and combat veterans with no PTSD symptoms are no more violent than comparable other men (Boulanger and Kadushin, 1986). A study by Lorr, Peck, and Stenger (1975) does highlight some significant differences between all Vietnam Era veterans and World War II veterans. Younger veterans, the authors state "are more outgoing, attention-seeking, mistrustful, resistant to rules and conventional norms, impulsive, and undefensive about themselves" (p. 509). "Since they believe authority is not responsive, they tend to be bitter, and suspicious of those in authority" (p. 510).

Many Vietnam veterans entered the college environment with a perception that public opinion was against them and that negative feelings existed toward the military in general. They tended to place the responsibility for origination of these negative public perceptions with the media, who they believed presented biased, unfavorable coverage of both the war and the men who fought it (Patterson, 1982).

Continuing education in the 1980's has stressed the necessity of reaching out to special student populations and including them in a variety of support networks. These efforts maximize the possibility of educational success by insuring that disadvantaged groups have the full power and resources of the university available to them. Perhaps it is indicative of the times, but in retrospect it seems clear that Vietnam veterans did not have the luxury of viable support groups as a campus resource. For the most part returning "nam vets" participated in higher education as solitary individuals and had little visible

support to help their post-military re-entry efforts.

A major study of the men who fought in Vietnam, prepared for the Veterans Administration by Egendorf et. al, (1981, p. 7,8) highlights some compelling research about their educational experiences and the ensuing results. In their book titled Legacies of Vietnam: Comparative Adjustment of Veterans and their Peers, the authors report:

(1) In general, nonveterans are better educated than Vietnam Era veterans who, in turn, are better educated than Vietnam Veterans.

(2) In the competition for high level jobs, nonveterans are markedly more successful than veterans. Among veterans, Era veterans are somewhat more successful than Vietnam veterans.

(3) Much of the occupational difference between veterans and nonveterans is due to educational differences, especially the greater likelihood of nonveterans being college graduates.

(4) Unemployment is especially likely to plague black Vietnam veterans, while a greater proportion of whites have failed to take advantage of educational opportunities available under the GI Bill.

(5) Military duty in Vietnam had a negative effect upon post-military achievement. Our analysis strongly suggests that the effect of military service on occupation occurs primarily through its effect on dampening post-military education attainment.

In her book Lives After Vietnam, Card (1983) reported the differences in the number of years of schooling by Vietnam

veterans versus nonveterans by linking educational achievement to their military experiences. "Veterans catch up and eventually surpass their nonveteran peers on the lower-level post-high school vocational and two-year college (AA) degrees. In contrast, by age thirty-six, these same veterans have not caught up with their nonveteran peers on the higher-level college and post-undergraduate college degrees. It is likely they never will" (p. 37).

In order to more fully appreciate the special nature of Vietnam veterans, one must begin to understand other post-war readjustment problems of this population. Some revealing studies indicate many of the dynamics regarding this group of veterans, and informs us of the various psyho-social difficulties experienced by these men and women. While the majority of Vietnan veterans have competently adjusted their roles from military to civilian living, many have not been so fortunate. There is a darker side to the readjustment difficulties of a large number of "nam vets" which suggests the frightful cost the war has exacted, and continues to exact, from those who served in Vietnam. It is against this backdrop that we can gain more insight about the nature of being a Vietnam veteran and their ability to initiate and complete a college education.

A Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) staff report (1988, September, p. 12) documents the following studies:

(1) In 1978, a Disabled American Veteran (DAV) study concluded that 500,000 to 750,000 Vietnam veterans suffer from post traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), a major mental illness highly related to high combat exposure. Veterans suffer such

difficulties as survivor guilt, hyperalertness, problems with intimate relationships, sleep disturbances, depression, and fantasies of retaliation, destruction and suicide - as well as substance abuse.

(2) A 1981 landmark Veterans Administration (VA) study on combat related stress, "Legacies of Vietnam" (Engendorf et al. 1981) made similar findings. This study places the number of Vietnam veterans with symptoms of PTSD at 600,000 - 900,000. One principal investigator, Dr. Arthur Engendorf, estimated that two million veterans (of the three million that served in Vietnam) could benefit from therapy in one form or another, even if that therapy simply consisted of talking to other veterans.

(3) "Lives after Vietnam," a 1983 study by Josefina J. Card found that 19.3 percent of all Vietnam veterans and 27 percent of combat veterans had severe adjustment problems. This study also found that higher levels of alcohol by these veterans during and after military service is associated with lower civilian educational attainment.

(4) A 1985 study conducted by Columbia University for the American Legion, reported that more than a million veterans had nervous breakdowns or thought they would after they returned home from the war. The research also found that Vietnam veterans earned $3,000 to $5,000 less per year than their peers, and a significant number lived well below the poverty level.

(5) A 1986 special congressional committee placed the number of homeless Vietnam veterans at between 82,000 and 110,000.

(6) In 1988, the Centers for Disease Control concluded that Vietnam veterans were more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and alcoholism with nearly 500,000 having experienced severe PTSD symptoms.

While blacks served in relative proportion to their numbers in the U. S. population, Allen (1986) reports that they suffer PTSD at a higher rate than white veterans. "Diagnosis and treatment of this population is complicated by their frequent alcohol and drug abuse, medical, legal, mental health , and vocational problems" (p. 55).

Hispanics also suffered extensively from their participation in the Vietnam war. A distinctive feature of this population is the high proportion of negative relationships with close family members, especially spouses. "Highly symptomatic PTSD veterans reported significantly smaller networks, fewer contacts outside the close family circles, and more negative emotionally directed toward family members, and appeared more alienated from their cultural heritage than other groups" (Escobar et al. 1983, p. 585).

Females also participated in the Vietnam war. 7,484 women served "in country." Of this number 6,250, or 83.5 percent were nurses (Hammerschmidt, 1982). Other females served as administrators, officers, doctors, and journalists. Women experienced the same chaos, pain, and futility of the Vietnam war as did males. Eight women died in Vietnam as a direct result of the hostilities.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF A VIETNAM VETERAN SUBCULTURE AT THE FSU CAMPUS

To this student's knowledge there is no professional literature that addresses the topic of Vietnam veterans as a campus subculture. This suggests a research gap in the literature and perhaps the following mini-ethnography will serve to ignite interest in this area. The purpose of this ethnography is to further such an interest by depicting an informal group of Vietnam veterans who attend college at Florida State University. This study will also include the methodology used to conduct the ethnography, describe the membership, its purpose, norms, values, and needs.

Methodology

Information was gathered about the support group of Vietnam veteran students by observing and interacting with them in three different settings. The first setting took place at the home of one of the members who lives in Alumni village. This person was my "informant" for this study and is one of the group leaders. He frequently organizes an occasional get together at his "hooch" and he did so for my benefit. My informant is a former U. S. Navy "River Rat" who served one tour "in country" patrolling the tributaries of the Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam, and is a member of two other formal veteran service organizations (DAV and VVA) (see appendix "A" for a taxonomy of language terms and definitions used by these Vietnam veterans). My informant and I spent approximately one-hour discussing the purpose of my study and arranging to set up a time, date, and place for me to meet the other members. The rights to privacy and respect for the

views of members were discussed along with assurances that confidentiality would be maintained.

The first meeting with this student group did not start well, despite high expectations on my part that it would. My informant failed to mention that I wanted each member to complete a short survey of basic information about the composition of the support group. As a result of this omission, most of the group members assumed that since I was a "nam vet" my interest was strictly centered on becoming a member. During the initial introductions all conversation centered on my wartime experiences, and other discussions regarding my educational pursuits and professional interests. In an attempt to shift the focus away from me I proceeded to ask some "grand tour" questions and asked several members to complete my brief survey. This statement seemed to annoy several members and it took a while to "set things straight" by explaining my reasons for being. One outspoken member commented that he "would complete the form for me, but he was tired of doing that "bullshit" everytime somebody wanted to "pick his brains." Despite this initial setback the first meeting proceeded to run smoothly, as did the remaining two times we met.

The second meeting occurred approximately two weeks later when I was invited to "go out with the boys" and share some talk while having a few drinks. The third and last official meeting with this group occurred when I marched with them in the annual Veterans Day parade on November 11, 1989. The invitation for this "march" was extended at the second meeting where plans were made to participate with other formal veterans organizations. By

this time the reaction to my presence was entirely positive and I felt an accepted member of the group. Any specific questions about the support group that remained after the third meeting were answered by my informant.

Evaluation of Methodology

This student would refine several features of the methodology used to gather information about the support group. In the first instance it would be helpful to meet several other members of the group prior to meeting with the entire group. This would probably prevent the initial misunderstandings that arose about my coming to the first meeting. By meeting several members informally I could pass along specific information about my project. They, in turn, could advise other members of my intentions, and hopefully avoid any misunderstandings. A second recommendation would be to ask the members to complete my brief survey privately, or ask the informant to do it for me (which he later suggested as an afterthought). The survey instrument proved to be very useful because it provided significant demographic details that would be hard to remember without taking notes during the meetings. However, once the survey was completed it did free me to concentrate on observing and "mentally recording" other important details of the group. A tape recorder was deemed inappropriate because of the group interactions and the unusual settings where the study was conducted. In summary then, very little methodology would be changed since a wealth of details were gathered to complete this project.

Description of the Subculture

The support group of Vietnam veterans is an informal, and loosely organized subculture; there are no dues, rules, titles or bylaws. This group is centered around two primary membership requirements, military and academic experiences. The total membership is small and ranges from about 7-9 regular persons to as many as 12-13 depending on the occasion and the schedule of the participants. Nine members is the most this student was able to meet during the study. Surveys completed by nine members revealed the composition of the group to be: four members served in the U. S. Army (two were "grunts", one was a "cannon cocker" and one female was a nurse), two members served in the Marine Corps (both were "grunts"), two members served in the Navy (one was a "river rat" and one was a "remington raider"), one member served in the Airforce as a pilot of a "spooky" gunship, was the only officer in the group, and the only retired person. The average age of the members was 41. The survey revealed that of the nine members of the support group six of the members were students in a human services program (two in social work, two in psychology, one in counseling, and one in marriage and family), one was in business, one was in engineering, and one was in pre-law. Four members were in undergraduate studies (two juniors and two seniors) and five members were in graduate programs (three in a masters program and two in a doctoral program). All group members were white, although several black "brothers" have been identified and invited to participate in the group, although none have accepted the offer. Four of the nine are currently married, three have

been divorced in the two years, and two members have never been married (one male and one female). Three of the married members and all three of the divorced members have children.

Survey information also revealed the extent to which the members were affiliated with other traditional veterans service organizations. Two members belonged to the Vietnan veterans of America (VVA), one belonged to the American Legion, one to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and one is a member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) although there is not a local chapter in the Tallahassee area. This information gives an indication of how individual members met each other and learned of the support group outside the classroom. None of the members learned of the groups existence from contacts made in a classroom. These members have participated, or currently participate, in an interlocking network of services related to veterans. For example, at one time or another, all group members have utilized the counseling services of the Tallahassee Veterans readjustment center (VET Center), the FSU veterans affairs office (primarily for certification of GI Bill benefits), and the regional Veterans Administration Medical Center in Lakeland (primarily for medical services). It is through meeting fellow veterans at one or more of these activities that friendships were established and that a nucleus of members developed to initiate support group activities.

This information shows that services outside the FSU campus are the primary means by which Vietnam veterans establish contact with fellow veterans. These are important services to these men

and women and this suggests that academic and social support services for "nam vets" are practically nonexistent on the FSU campus. Most of the group members believed that if "we don't do it for ourselves, nobody is going to do it for us." This refrain echoes a familiar theme observed in a variety of other settings where Vietnam veterans interact and this reflects an attitude developed in previous years. As one member put it, "together then, together now - nam vets helping nam vets, this is what is important to us."

Several members revealed some specifics regarding how this support came into existence. The FSU veterans affairs office conducted a "counseling" or "academic support" group for all veterans from late 1985 to early 1988. The official name of this group was "Archaoes, a Greek term which roughly translated means "old warrior." Eventually the "Archaoes" group died from lack of interest among the members and was discontinued. The reason for the discontinuance was the incompatibility among the various types of veterans who comprised the group. As one member put it succinctly "nam vets, especially combat vets, couldn't relate to the Era and post Vietnam Era vets, and they couldn't relate to us." One might think that all veterans would form a bond based on their common military experiences, but this was not the case. One member was sure that "Archaoes members thought that "nam vets" believed they were better than everybody else" and this attitude did not help the process of group cohesion. Another member felt that "non-nam vets" failed to appreciate the struggles and sacrifices that Vietnam veterans made during and after the war and that this division was a major contributor to

the eventual failure of the "Archaoes" support group. One member expressed his opinion about this matter by stating, "if you ain't been in the bush, you ain't shit" - this was not a minority viewpoint!

Two "Archaoes" group members, my informant, and the Army nurse, continued to meet informally in the subsequent months. They met other "nam vet" students at several veteran organizational functions and decided to initiate an informal support group strictly for Vietnam veterans at FSU. Several unstructured discussion sessions were held and this resulted in a beginning of the group. During one of the initial social functions organized by my informant, a discussion regarding the disbanding of the FSU "Archaoes" support group prompted one member to blurt out that he was a "bastard stepchild of the FSU group that nobody wanted." Most everybody in attendance liked that characterization of themselves and the academic support group was given the informal title "Bastard Stepchildren of Archaoes (BSA)."

Purpose of the Subculture

Based on observations, direct questioning, and a survey of members, the primary purpose of BSA is to provide social, academic, and emotional support for each other. This manifests itself in a variety of ways, frequently stemming from the social gatherings that are organized on a "whenever we can get together basis." All the members felt that they needed a social setting where they could interact with fellow students who shared the same identity as "nam vets." The sharing of wartime experiences,

perceptions about current issues of the day, and the successes and failures resulting from "academic pursuits" at FSU take up much of their time and interest when they are assembled. Wives, children, and girlfriends are invited to any social gathering and sometimes this can make for a sizable number of persons in attendance.

New members and guests are introduced to the group at these social gatherings and it is during these times where offers of support and advice about academic matters usually transpire. Telephone numbers are exchanged, and on some occasions, members have called each other with a particular problem, sometimes of a emotional crisis nature. During these unstructured social interactions, solutions to academic problems of an institutional nature are discussed. For example, the identification of various campus resources, where they are located, how to use them, people to contact, and how to "use the system to make it work for you" are frequent themes I observed.

Two members in particular are involved in an activity that comes the closest to being a group project. This involves working with the Director of the FSU Veterans Affairs office on campus by helping assess the need for a "greek style" veterans fraternal organization. A survey is being put together that will be mailed to all FSU veterans. Among other things, it will ask veterans of all wars if they would be interested in helping form a local chapter of Chi Gamma Lota, a national academic honorary society strictly for veterans. Apparently there is some interest to start a chapter of this type and the BSA thinks this would be a major asset on campus for veterans. In summary the

purposes of the BSA are very loosely defined and stem from the situational needs of the members. The locus of activity stems from infrequent social gatherings.

Norms and Values of the Subculture

When BSA members were asked the "mini-tour" question, "What is it like to be a Vietnam veteran on the FSU campus" the consensus appeared to be that it was an "OK feeling." The membership generally agreed that "nam vets" were "finally getting the respect they deserved from college students and the professors." Several commented that "while we appreciate the change in attitudes from previous years," in some cases it was a situation of "too little, too late." Several graduate students who attended college in the early 1970'S were the most vocal about noticing attitude changes over the years, and these students were most appreciative of the respect they believe they received. In terms of being visible on the FSU campus by wearing T-shirts and caps that identified them as a Vietnam veteran, it was obvious that several wore them with pride - most did not. When asked about this, the latter group said they felt uncomfortable being identified that way in a large public setting, and would rather "just keep a low profile, and get my education."

Another "mini-tour" questions was, "have your experiences in Vietnam been a positive or negative influence in your life?" The membership seemed to agree that in the long-run, being "in country" and being a "nam vet" was generally a positive influence on their lives. Several clarified these remarks implying that

the early years after the war were difficult to handle, particularly those "of us vets that were later diagnosed with PTSD, or suffered through other problems related to this mental illness." Several members indicated they had experienced numerous problems associated with their use of alcohol and illegal drugs. These, in turn, had a profound and debilitating effect on their family lives, interactions with fellow employees, and their perceptions of persons in authority. All members of BSA have overcome previous problems associated with their wartime experiences, tend to remember and talk about the exciting aspects of being "in country," and do not like to dwell on prior emotional and social difficulties. As one member put it to me bluntly, "what's the fucking point?"

In terms of getting to know their political views, BSA members tended to express cynical and skeptical opinions about these matters. Any time a "mini-tour" question was asked about these areas, it seemed to ignite heated discussions that divided people. After asking several of these questions, and witnessing the generally negative results, I decided to forego any further inquiry in this area. Discussing politics seems to cast a pall over the group, and though this is an area of interest to me, we all informally agreed that this was "out of bounds" in a group setting and should be left to discussing with individual members.

It was during the second meeting with BSA members that I recognized the inevitable barrier that should not be breached during my interactions with them. To really know and completely understand these persons, would involve asking them specific questions about their prior emotional problems and the

details of specific "turning points" in their lives. Since this went beyond the scope of this study, and since I did not want to "play a therapist" role with them, this aspect would have to be wait for another project and another time.

Needs of the Subculture

All members of BSA are using the GI Bill educational benefits to finance their undergraduate and graduate education, and these benefits will expire December 31, 1989. One of the primary incentives for attending college is that members wanted to take advantage of their benefits before they expired. Continued financing of their college education is the single most important need of this subculture. When questioned about this matter, the members unanimously agreed that they were too far along in their education to stop going. Most have applied for various scholarships, student defense loans, work study programs, and graduate assistantships. Some have borrowed money from parents and one member has applied for a loan from a commercial lending institution. The members are not without some financial support, but most lament that they waited too long in returning to school to use these valuable benefits. Several members are hoping that the current expiration date for the Vietnam Era GI Bill will be extended. There has been one extension already, but it is unlikely there will be another.

A second need of the subculture centers around child-care and day-care services for their children. Despite the average of 41, several members have children below the age of ten and this is a hardship. The combination of work, attending college,

seeking out quality day-care and paying for it is a vital concern to the parents. Most have made some arrangement, but all agree that services are marginal at best and very expensive. Two members in particular take turns baby-sitting the kids so the other person can have some free time. In other cases, parents, neighbors, and friends help share some, if not all the responsibility of child-care, when the parent is working or attending school.

The final need expressed by member of BSA were general in nature, but specific in focus. All members agreed that FSU could and should do more to assist all veterans adjust to the pressures of contemporary college life. Finances are a major issue with most veterans, but other services are just as important. Support services that are designed to assist veterans become more fully integrated on the FSU campus would be helpful. The FSU veterans service office does pretty well for the limited services they provide - but much more could be done. All members agreed that starting a "Greek style" veterans fraternal organization should be an important first step. This organization could be the locus of veteran activity on campus, and an active advocate for improving services to campus servicemen and women.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of a subculture of Vietnam veterans on the FSU campus has uncovered a small, informal, and low-key group of men and women. They meet on an irregular basis to share the camaraderie of their military and college experiences. This group has taken the initiative to organize an unstructured

environment that meets the needs of "nam vets" who are continuing, and in some cases, starting their postwar education. In many respects, members of BSA are just like any other group of students on the FSU campus. They have concerns about their education, careers, future jobs, the welfare of their children, and the manner in which they are able to get their needs met. If one could detach the members of BSA from their experiences in Vietnam, it is likely that they would be perceived as a fairly normal group of mature college students.

One purpose of this ethnographic study was to assess the extent to which Vietnam veteran students have recovered from their wartime experiences, and how well they are integrated back into society. The answer to both concerns is positive and it reflects the tenacity of men and women who have suffered one of the ultimate forms of adversity. Just like most college students, members of BSA have their problems. However, the locus of their concerns stem not from unresolved wartime conflicts, but arise from decisions which they have initiated and over which they have control. This view is reflected in the comments of one hardened combat veteran when asked to assess "how are things different with you now, as opposed to earlier years?" His response was, "now I'm in control of my life, and I don't have to worry about other people making decisions for me. I may not make the best decisions, but now I can live with what I decide." There is little doubt in this students mind that members of BSA have taken change of their lives, and this is a very comforting fact!

As a final note to this mini-ethnography, it seems

appropriate to remember that a wave of non-traditional Americans are returning to the academic world. Given the tremendous amount of energy spent to identify and recruit these various groups, it would be in the best interest of the local community and the university to include Vietnam veterans in this special effort. The times have changed and nothing less than our best effort to re-engage America's forgotten warriors in the American dream will be acceptable. Only time will tell the final story and only time will tell if contemporary continuing educators will rise to meet this special challenge. Vietnam veterans will go it alone if they have to, but most prefer to seek the assistance and support of the larger organization in which they choose to operate.

APPENDIX "A"

Taxonomy of Subculture Language Used by Vietnam Veterans

AGENT ORANGE - A toxic herbicide sprayed over parts of Vietnam to reduce or kill the foliage.

BOOKU DINKY DAU - Vietnamese term for crazy.

CANNON COCKER - A soldier who operates various types of artillery, primarily large cannons.

CHARLIE - A termed used to describe native Vietnamese, orientals in general, and the enemy in particular.

CLICK - 1,000 yards.

COBRA - Helicopter gunship.

DAV - Disabled American Veterans - A national veterans service organization specifically for disabled vets.

DIETTY MAU - Vietnamese for get it right now, hurry up.

ERA VET - A serviceman who served during the Vietnam era, but did not serve "in country."

FLY BOY - Usually used to indicate someone who served in the U. S. Air Force

FRUIT SALAD - A term used to describe the awards and medals worn on the uniforms of "nam vets."

FUNNY PAPER - Combat radio talk for map.

GOOK - A derisive term used to describe orientals in general and the enemy in particular. Slopes, VC, Cong, Slant Eyes, and Dinks are other terms used interchangeably with gook.

GREEN MACHINE - The U. S. Army.

GRUNT - A term used specifically to identify infantry troops. Generally used to mean any person participating in ground based operations.

HAM & EGGS - High explosives.

HOOCH -House, dwelling, bunker, or any facility where troops gather to rest or relax.

HUEY - A helicopter gunship frequently used to transport troops

to and from combat.

I LOVE LUCY - Illumination grenade used in night warfare.

IN COUNTRY - Refers specifically to "theater vets" who actually spent time on Vietnamese soil.

IN THE PADDIES - Having fought Charlie in the jungle and rice paddies of Vietnam. Also means having fought in bush warfare.

LEATHERNECK - A member of the U. S. Marine Corps. Also called jarheads, ji-rines, and Uncle Sam's Misguided Children.

NAM VET - A veteran who served in Vietnam during the war.

NCO - Noncommissioned officer.

R & R - Rest and relaxation away from combat, usually on leave.

REMF - Rear echelon mother-fucker. Some one who is not participating in the combat.

REMINGTON RAIDER - Administrative personnel such as clerks and typists.

RIVER RAT - U. S. Navy personnel who served "in country" on small, high speed patrol gunboats, usually in the rivers of Vietnam.

ROUND EYE - An American female.

SHORT TIME - Brief sexual encounter with a native female. Also called "boom boom."

SPOOKY - A heavily armed U. S. Air Force gunship. Also referred to as "puff the magic dragon."

SWABBIE - A general term describing personnel in the U. S. Navy.

THEATER VET - Personnel who actually served in Vietnam during the Vietnam Era. This terms contrasts with "Era vets" who were not "in country."

VFW - Veterans of Foreign Wars - a national veterans service organizations for vets who served in any war on foreign soil.

VVA - Vietnam Veterans of America - a national veterans service organization for veterans who served during the Vietnam Era.

WILLIE PETER - A white phosporous hand grenade. Also called a Wilson Pickett.

APPENDIX "B"

SUBCULTURE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

INSTRUCTIONS - This is is a very informal method for me to gather basic information about you as a member of a subculture at FSU. Please answer all questions which you are comfortable with. Ask me if you have questions about the different categories.

AGE_____ SEX_____ RACE_____ MARITAL STATUS

DATES OF MILITARY SERVICE IN VIETNAM_____

BRANCH OF MILITARY SERVICE WHILE IN VIETNAM_____

ARE YOU A VIETNAM COMBAT VETERAN? YES_____ NO

LIST THE MILITARY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS THAT YOU BELONG TO NOW

_____

LIST THE VETERAN SERVICES YOU HAVE USED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

_____

LIST THREE PURPOSES YOU BELIEVE THIS GROUP MEETS FOR YOU

_____

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